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RHEFHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 7541
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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [FAIR](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: MANPADS ASSIST VISIT (MAV) AT LAHORE AIRPORT

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 2826

[1](#)B. ISLAMABAD1642

[1](#)C. LAHORE 183

[1](#)1. (SBU) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 2 for action request and paragraph 13 for suggested talking points. Washington leaves to post discretion as to the timing for approaching Pakistani authorities, given the current negative media environment surrounding U.S. passenger screening procedures.

[1](#)2. (SBU) By interagency agreement, Embassy Islamabad and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) should coordinate to offer the Government of Pakistan (GOP) a Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) Assist Visit (MAV) for Lahore Airport. Embassy Islamabad and TSA should communicate to appropriate government officials that undertaking an MAV is necessary for approval of new Last Point of Departure (LPD) flights to the United States, but it will not guarantee a positive U.S. decision on Pakistan International Airlines' (PIA's) outstanding request for non-stop flights. The MAV is one way to enhance their chances of route approval if appropriate remediation measures are conducted. Embassy Islamabad should also advise that the USG is prepared to consider GOP requests for technical assistance in mitigating the threat posed by MANPADS; however the completion and funding of MAV-recommended mitigation measures is the responsibility of the host government

CONTEXT

[1](#)3. (SBU) In 1999, the U.S. signed an "Open Skies" agreement with Pakistan that allows for non-stop flights between the two countries if certain criteria, including security provisions, are met. Since PIA requested permission for a non-stop flight, the GOP has believed that it was on the verge of receiving approval on several occasions. Changes in the local security situation, changes in related areas of U.S. policy, or unrealistic Pakistani expectations led to confusion and disappointment on the part of the GOP and diminished the credibility of U.S. commitments. A repetition of this situation should be avoided since it could distract from the strategic partnership we are attempting to develop.

[1](#)4. (SBU) PIA currently operates a flight from Lahore to New York. The inbound flight departs Lahore and, per TSA

requirements, stops in Manchester for security screening. All passengers, luggage and cargo are offloaded and screened; after successful screening, the flight departs for New York. The plane returns non-stop from New York-JFK to Lahore.

¶5. (SBU) In August 2009, TSA conducted its most recent security assessment of Lahore Airport, which did not include an MAV, and found that Lahore Airport met basic International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) security standards. No MAV was proposed to the Pakistanis at that time.

¶6. (SBU) Since that time, however, it has become clear that the absence of a clear picture on the MANPADS threat and Pakistani mitigation measures will prevent the USG's necessary thorough consideration of PIA's request. Completion of an MAV would contribute to filling in the picture, but it is less clear how Pakistan could mitigate the threat. Challenging security conditions and political turmoil will further complicate the implementation of necessary mitigation measures by the GOP.

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MAV REQUIREMENTS & COMPONENTS

¶7. (SBU) TSA developed the MAV program to assist foreign government officials in identifying potential vulnerabilities and, upon the host nation's request, to recommend measures to mitigate the risk of an attack using MANPADS and other stand-off attack weapons against aircraft. TSA conducts MAVs in cooperation with host government aviation security and law enforcement personnel responsible for the target airport. The five-day MAV program takes the form of a jointly conducted assistance visit aimed at identifying vulnerabilities, sharing best practices and, as requested by the host government, proposing possible measures to help mitigate MANPADS threats using techniques recommended by ICAO and the U.S.

¶8. (SBU) The MAV team provides training to host government participants while performing ground and aerial surveys of the locations around the airport that could be used as a potential MANPADS launch sites. After completion of the surveys, the MAV team presents an out-brief of the initial results to the host government participants. If requested by the host government, the team will develop a list of recommended mitigation measures. The MAV team spends approximately 60 days preparing the written report, which is classified as "CONFIDENTIAL RELEASABLE TO ." The report is delivered to the U.S. Embassy for dissemination to the appropriate host government authorities. Completion and funding of MAV-recommended mitigation measures is the responsibility of the host government.

¶9. (SBU) The challenging security environment in Pakistan will likely cause additional delays, especially if the security situation further deteriorates in and around Lahore or intelligence reports find a specific threat to aircraft flying non-stop to the United States. Re-inspections of Lahore Airport will likely be necessary if security conditions change.

SIMILAR ROUTES & OTHER MANPADS MITIGATION PROGRAMS

¶10. (SBU) The British Department of Transportation conducted a MANPADS assessment in 2006 for Islamabad Airport only. They also provided basic threat training and mitigation strategies for Islamabad to the Pakistani military, police, and security personnel. There was very little work done in Lahore due to the lack of British Airways service there.

¶11. (SBU) Decisions in 2008 by British Airways and Lufthansa to cease service to Pakistan were based on the deteriorating local security situation following the

bombing of the Marriott hotel in Islamabad. The airlines decided that low passenger volume and profitability of the routes would not justify the necessary additional security measures. Neither the British nor the German governments formally participated in the air carriers' decisions to end service to Pakistan, but government participation in these decisions is implicit do to the subject carriers being national carriers. The possible threat posed by MANPADS was known to the governments and airlines involved but does not appear to have played an important role in the decisions.

MANAGING PAKISTANI EXPECTATIONS & MEDIA INQUIRIES

¶12. (SBU) The conduct of an MAV creates the possibility of media reports and speculations linking American officials

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with the perceived safety and security of passengers traveling through Lahore Airport. Analysts agree that the GOP is likely to address the issue with the media once an MAV occurs. While we cannot guarantee the discretion of local officials, we must ensure that no disclosure occurs from U.S. officials. Any public affairs response to media attention should emphasize the joint, cooperative nature of the MAV as part of broad aviation security cooperation with host nation officials participating as partners.

TALKING POINTS

¶13. (SBU) Post should draw on the following talking points in engaging with Government of Pakistan officials.

-- The MAV is an assistance visit to a foreign government to share experiences and best practices in addressing MANPADS threats, based on International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and U.S. standards.

-- During the five-day program, the MAV team provides training to host government participants while also performing ground and aerial surveys of the locations around the airport that could be used as potential launch sites for a MANPADS attack on commercial aviation.

-- After completion of the surveys, the MAV team presents an out-brief of the initial results to the host government officials. If requested by the host government, the team will develop a list of recommended mitigation measures. After returning to Washington, the MAV team prepares a written report, to be delivered via the U.S. Embassy to the appropriate Pakistan authorities.

-- It is then the responsibility of Pakistan to determine the implementation of any mitigation steps. U.S. authorities would consider requests for additional technical support in implementing those measures, but remediation activities will be at the expense of the GOP.

-- Agreeing to undertake a MAV will not guarantee a positive decision on PIA's outstanding request for non-stop flights to the United States. Also, depending on the time delay between the MAV and implementation of sufficient mitigation measures, it may be necessary to conduct additional inspection visits to reconfirm other aspects of airport and aviation security.

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